# Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT OGDEN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT March 21, 2008

The attached report contains the results of the first two phases (Self-Assessment Process and On-Site Validation Visit) of the Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS). This Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process is conducted by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) Special Education Services (SES), as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. The process is designed to focus resources on improving results for students with disabilities through enhanced partnerships between charter school and district programs, USOE-SES, the Utah Personnel Development Center, parents, and advocates.

The first phase of this process included the development of a Program Improvement Plan. The second phase, On-Site Validation, conducted in Ogden City School District on February 12-13, 2008, included student record reviews, interviews with school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents.

This report contains a more complete description of the process utilized to collect data and to determine strengths, areas out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA, and recommendations for improvement in each of the core IDEA areas.

### **Areas of Strength**

The validation team found the following:

#### **General Supervision**

- File compliance and organization has improved significantly since the Spring 2006 File Review. Forms are in logical order and more easily located.
- All special education forms are USOE approved.
- All district forms are on the district website and teachers access them from there. As they must be typewritten, they look more professional.
- In addition to on-going district mandated training, teachers are able to attend 2 conferences or inservices per year, for which the Special Education Department will pay for a substitute of their choice to enhance their skills as special educators. They may choose to use other district professional development days and/or personal leave to attend other trainings as desired.
- Teachers requested to attend 29 different trainings/conferences during the 2006-07 school year.
- Teachers are allowed to access 2 days of paid substitutes during the year (1 before and 1after winter break) to focus on paperwork activities.
- Year long support is given to first year and teachers on a letter of authorization (LOA).
- Teachers participating in the Alternative Teacher Preparation (ATP) program are assigned both a mentor teacher and a cooperating teacher.
- New teachers meet monthly with a special education teacher specialist, mentors and cooperating teachers and receive focused support.
- Special education manuals have been developed to assist special education teachers organize
  files, understand the special education paper trail, have access to a hard copy of forms, and
  provide general special education procedures. The manuals are updated each year and new or
  replacement documentation is distributed at an annual opening meeting each August.
- The Special Education Department is focusing on progress monitoring. All special education teachers received initial and follow-up training this year. Expectations are that teachers will collect data on student outcomes and use that data to make appropriate instructional decisions for individual students.
- A system was implemented where SCRAM sheets can be completed online and e-mailed directly
  to the SCRAM secretary. This has facilitated greater accuracy and communication. Once
  completed, with all information recorded accurately, the secretary sends a hard copy back to the
  teacher to put in the student's file, eliminating that step for the teacher.
- Private schools are afforded the opportunity annually to determine how their proportionate share of funding will be spent.
- General education teachers described ways they participate in the evaluation and eligibility determination process.
- Paraprofessionals are supervised by the special education teachers.

- Each school has an instructional coach who is being trained in positive behavior supports (PBS).
   Ogden City School District is developing a plan to develop a school-wide PBS plan in each school over the next few years.
- The teacher specialists are knowledgeable and provide support for special education teachers in schools. Assistance is provided in areas of teacher request. During file reviews, the teacher specialists provided technical assistance and discussed corrections needed with the special education staff.
- High Scope curriculum is being implemented in the district preschool program.
- Ogden City School District Special Education Department focuses on progress monitoring. The
  district provided mandatory professional development on progress monitoring techniques, with
  assistance from the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC). They are focusing on
  collecting and utilizing data, as discussed by special education teachers and the special
  education director.
- The special education induction program includes beginning teachers, as well as teachers on an alternative route to licensure (ARL). This support is provided in addition to a mentor and consists of frequent meetings with a teacher specialist.
- Child find procedures include outreach activities that target private school students and highly
  mobile students, as well as students advancing from grade to grade. Consultation with
  representative from private schools is documented annually and records are maintained
  regarding the number of students evaluated, but determined as not eligible.
- Teachers and staff are trained annually on district confidentiality procedures during in-services, emails, and individual consultations.
- Special education records are maintained in secure cabinets and include records of access.
- General education teachers are provided with copies of relevant portions of the IEP for their students with disabilities.
- U-PASS data is reviewed at the district, school, and teacher level. Teachers are provided with their own data results and schools set aside team time to review data and look at instructional needs of all students.
- Caseloads are reviewed frequently by the Special Education Director. Teachers are provided additional classroom support as needed. In order to determine the need for support, student progress data and IEP documentation are reviewed, as well as teacher input.
- During the annual opening in-service, special education staff are provided with the priorities for improvement in the special education program; follow up reminders are provided by email and during school visits. All new teachers are trained in the Utah Special Education Rules; changes and updates are provided at the annual meeting to all teachers.
- Professional development opportunities are provided in many ways for special education staff
  and school administrators, including in-service, emails, and access to on-line information through
  the district web-site and LRP Connections. Professional development needs are determined
  through staff and administrator input, concerns, observations, and file reviews.
- Paraprofessionals receive on-the-job training and are able to attend the annual Paraeducator Conference. Development of a structured, ongoing training program is in development.
- Initial evaluations completed with 45 school days of receiving parental consent for students with disabilities of all ages, including preschool.
- Strong district administrative support is provided to special education staff, as reported by staff during interviews.
- Speech language pathologists are provided with time to collaborate, attend in-service, and provide instruction within the classroom.
- Special education teachers and related service providers discussed the valuable assistance provided by paraprofessionals in the general education and special education classrooms.
   Volunteers and peer tutors are also used to provide additional support for students with disabilities
- A curriculum delivery plan has been developed at the elementary level to ensure that all students receive the core curriculum at scheduled intervals. This plan includes instruction provided to students with disabilities. Assessments are given every six weeks to measure student progress. The school team meets to discuss progress and address areas of instructional need.
- At the middle school and high school level, tutoring and additional academic assistance is available for all students. Students with disabilities appreciated being included in the tutoring program, as stated during focus groups.

- Students in secondary school, during focus groups, stated that special education has been beneficial in providing support and helping them succeed in classes.
- Surpass High School students discussed goal planning and leadership programs that they participate in.
- Special education staff are knowledgeable, supportive, and care about their students and their success, as documented in staff and student interviews, observations, and parent statements.
- Existing data is reviewed by the evaluation team prior to reevaluations and some initial evaluations.
- Eligibility determinations are current and included in special education files. Evaluations were sufficiently comprehensive to identify the student's special education and related service needs.
- Evaluation Summary Reports include data from assessments.
- Variety of assessment tools were used during evaluations, including informal assessments.
- School staff, when interviewed, described the school referral process, felt it was timely and efficient, and identified strategies they used with struggling students, as well as with students who are not making progress.
- Related services providers, when interviewed, discussed training on evaluation tools they
  received from the district.

#### Parent Involvement

- Ogden City School District sent surveys to 500 parents of students with disabilities as part of their self-assessment. Of those, 100 surveys were returned.
- Most parents responding to the survey appear to be generally pleased with the special education program.
- They are receiving their Procedural Safeguards and expressed that they are explained so they
  understood.
- Parents are given the opportunity to participate in all meetings with respect to evaluation, identification and FAPE, and educational placement of their children.
- Nearly 97% of parents responding indicated they had an opportunity to provide input prior to their child's evaluation and that the evaluation team listened to their input.
- Parents receive timely notice for meetings that are scheduled at a mutually agreeable time and place.
- Although parents reported that general educators only attended IEP meetings 83.7% of the time, they feel that general education teachers are aware of their children's learning needs (96.9%).
- Parents report that their children are receiving services identified on the IEP.
- Parents were surveyed regarding preferred training topics, best time for parent trainings, and whether they would attend offered trainings. The data will be utilized to develop effective parent training programs and assist in the consideration of alternate methods of providing parent training.
- Ogden City School District Special Education Department identified increasing parent involvement as a priority for improving the special education program.
- Progress reports on IEP goals are included in special education files. IEPs address how progress will be measured and when it will be reported to parents.
- Parents are provided with written prior notice of actions both proposed and refused by Ogden City School District regarding evaluation, eligibility, IEP implementation, and placement.
- Parents attended eligibility and IEP meetings, as documented by their signatures in special education files. When parents could not attend, the files contained documentation of multiple attempts to involve the parents. Parents were also included using alternate methods, such as conference calls.
- Parent involvement was emphasized throughout the school district during staff interviews. They
  included parent involvement throughout interviews.
- Copies of IEPs, eligibility determinations, and evaluation summary reports were provided to parents at IEP meetings. If the parent was unable to attend the meeting, copies were mailed to the parent and documented in the special education file.
- Procedural Safeguards are provided to parents at least annually. Procedural Safeguards are provided in alternate formats such as Braille, when needed by parents.
- Consent for evaluation and initial placement were signed by parents and included in special education files.

- Parents are included in some district sponsored trainings.
- Students, during focus groups, reported their parents attending IEP meetings.
- Parents described frequent and ongoing communication with special education staff. They stated
  that they were able to provide input towards IEP goals and that IEP team members listened to
  and considered their input. They also felt that special education teachers provided the
  accommodations listed on the IEP.
- Notice of meetings were included in special education files for IEP and placement meetings.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, stated that their students were making progress towards their IEP goals. They also said that the schools facilitated opportunities for them to provide input at times other than IEP meetings.

#### Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- All students being provided special education and related services have been determined to be eligible for those services by their IEP teams.
- IEPs contain measurable goals.
- All teachers administering the Woodcock-Johnson –III are fully trained and must be on approved list prior to test administration.
- The majority of students with disabilities are attending their neighborhood schools.
- As the district changed its boundaries, careful consideration was made in determining the location
  of self-contained classrooms in an effort to keep students as close to their neighborhood schools
  as possible.
- An additional classroom for students with severe disabilities has been added to next fall's
  numbers so that students moving into the new aerospace magnet school will be able to attend
  along side their friends, neighbors, brothers and sisters.
- An additional elementary ED Unit is being opened up next year in an effort to provide appropriate services to those students with severe behavior challenges.
- There is a teacher specialist who specifically works with schools in an effort to maintain students with behavior challenges in their neighborhood schools.
- All general education teachers interviewed were able to describe their role in the IEP process and stated that they can access their students' IEPs.
- Teachers are doing an improved job of writing present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements and goals and objectives.
- Ogden City School District has a full continuum of placement options available to meet the needs
  of the students with disabilities in the district boundaries.
- Interim alternative educational settings (IAES) are available when students with disabilities are removed from school long term.
- Placement decisions are determined by the IEP team and documented on IEPs. Teacher specialists provide assistance in reviewing data and suggestion additional interventions prior to moving to a more restrictive placement.
- The Behavior Specialist provides training for school staff on specific behavior interventions, as needed. When appropriate, paraprofessionals are included in the training.
- Extended school year (ESY) is considered for each student with disabilities during IEP team
  meetings. Decisions are documented on the IEP. Ogden School District has developed and
  revised an ESY document to help teams identify the need for ESY and then create an ESY plan.
- Current IEPs are included in special education files and generally included full team participation of required members.
- An excusal form is used if general education teachers can not attend IEP meetings. Written input was attached prior to the meeting.
- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements included current data and how the disability affects progress and involvement in the general education classroom.
- IEP goals are measurable and address all areas of educational need as identified in the PLAAFP statement.
- Students with disabilities participating in the Utah Alternative Assessment (UAA) had benchmarks included as part of their IEP.
- Specific special education and related services are included in the IEP.

- Progress monitoring data is included in special education files. During classroom observations, teachers referred to the progress monitoring data.
- During staff interviews, all school personnel were aware of the requirements for functional behavior assessments (FBA), behavior intervention plans (BIP), and manifestation determinations. Staff could also accurately describe their roles in the evaluation, eligibility, and IEP process.
- Student discipline data is tracked through the use of Discipline Tracker or Student Information System (SIS) programs. School administrators, during interviews, accurately described the IDEA disciplinary requirements.
- Students, during focus groups, described their teachers (general education and special education) taking the time to provide additional assistance. They also described attending their IEP meetings, the required team members in attendance, the purpose of the IEP, and the accommodations and services provided.
- During classroom observations, correlation between IEP PLAAFP statements and goals and instruction provided was evident.

#### **Transitions**

- Preschool programs for aged 3-5 are being provided in the district.
- There is a positive relationship with the area Head Start Program and Early Intervention Program.
- There is a regularly scheduled monthly meeting for the Early Intervention Program and the district preschool program for transition purposes.
- Preschool children whose primary home language is other than English (PHLOTE) are having eligibility determined much more quickly than in the past. This is due to assigning one of the district's 2 bilingual speech/language pathologists specifically to preschool.
- File reviews did not reveal any systemic errors regarding transition planning for school-aged students.
- High school special education teachers provide job sampling for students.
- Services are community-based when appropriate.
- IEPs were implemented by the student's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, if applicable.
- Transition meetings were held at least 90 days prior to eligibility for preschool, Part B program.
- Part C was invited to attend initial IEP meetings, when applicable.
- LEA representative participated in the transition planning meeting, as documented on the transition plan or meeting notes.
- Special education files contained documentation of the consideration of individual family service plans (IFSP).
- Parents were informed of their Part B rights and responsibilities during the transition planning meeting.
- Utah Preschool Outcomes (UPOD) forms were included in special education files, as needed.
- School to post-school transition planning included the use of age appropriate transition assessments.
- Course of study was included in school to post-school transition plans.
- Evidence of post-secondary education, employment, and independent living goals was included in transition plans.
- IEP goals reasonably enable the student to meet post-secondary goals.
- Students, when exiting the special education program for graduation or reaching maximum age, are provided with a summary of academic achievement and functional performance.
- Students, upon reaching the age of majority, are provided with all notices required under Part B of the IDEA.
- Students of transition age are invited to attend IEP meetings.
- Special education files included documentation of guardianship, when applicable.
- School staff, when interviewed, described methods to facilitate transition planning, the data considered, and adult service agency involvement.

# Disproportionality

- Students are generally participating with their non-disabled peers at higher rates than the state average.
- SCRAM sheets are in each student's file indicating race/ethnicity.

- Additional steps are taken prior to initiating a referral for special education and related services to
  ensure students are not being referred due to language barrier issues.
- Students are assessed in their native language when appropriate.
- Special education forms and assessments are available in Spanish.
- Translators are used at meetings; their attendance is documented.
- Race/ethnicity documented on SCRAM form in special education file.
- Primary home language documented in special education files. When students have a primary home language other than English, their English proficiency is assessed during their evaluation.

# Areas of Systemic Noncompliance\*

- IEPs and placement not reviewed annually.
- Reevaluations not conducted at least every three years.
- Evaluation procedures not followed: Autism checklist/rating scale not documented; Emotional
  Disturbance eligibility determination did not include a team determination that inappropriate
  behaviors are not due to an intellectual disability, vision or hearing impairments, or other medical
  conditions or that the behavior that adversely affects the student's educational performance has
  been exhibited over a long period of time and to a marked degree; Specific Learning Disabilities
  eligibility determination did not include a discrepancy report, observation or the relevant behavior
  noted during observation.

\*These areas represent items where the visiting team could not locate appropriate documentation of requirements of IDEA 2004 and Utah State Special Education Rules in student records or other data sources.